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ABSTRACT

This document contains information about the implications of the 1994 School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) for gender equity in Ohio vocational education programs. Presented first are selected statistics and Congressional findings regarding the following: the disparity between the current enrollment patterns and educational/career plans of high school students and labor market projections for the year 2000; wage gaps between various groups of males and females (especially between young men and women who do not attend college); and educational and work force trends among youths between the ages of 16 and 24. Discussed next are provisions and goals of the STWOA related to the following areas: introducing students at all levels to employment options leading to high-wage, high-skill employment; expanding school-to-work efforts beyond vocational education; ensuring that school-to-work activities serve all students; incorporating equity into secondary- and postsecondary-level school-based learning, work-based learning, and activities connecting school and work to the school-to-work transition; and developing local school-to-work implementation plans. Ohio's school-to-work implementation plan is outlined. Concluding the document are a lists of references, phone numbers of key Ohio school-to-work staff, and names/addresses of selected resource organizations. (MN)

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Ohio Vocational Sex Equity

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The School-to-Work Opportunities Act: Equitable Education for All Students

"...by the year 2000, 15 percent of all jobs will be unskilled; 20 percent will require a professional degree (bachelor's degree or higher), and more than 65 percent of all jobs will require specific skills demanding specialized education—that is, more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year college degree" (Brustein & Mahler, 1994, p. 15).

The above projections are startling, especially since over 75 percent of high-school students are preparing for a four-year education and the remaining 25 percent are in either a vocational or general education curriculum. Clearly, the current educational preparation does not match with the needs of the forthcoming workforce. The mismatch becomes even more magnified when we consider that only 25 percent of the secondary students who plan to attend college actually graduate from college. Except for the vocational students, the remaining secondary students enter the workforce with the credentials of a high school graduate with no specific training. This immediately translates into lower wages for the nontrained high-school graduate.

Young women who do not go to college need help most of all. For most young women who go straight into the workforce after graduating from high school, they "... can expect to take home paychecks that are 25 percent smaller than their male counterparts" (Milgram & Watkins, 1994, p. 1). For young women in vocational training, they still tend to cluster in sales, service, administrative and clerical support occupations, while young men cluster in trade and industry occupations. Young women who enter traditionally female occupations will earn less than young women who enter nontraditional occupations. Those students who are at-risk students, especially teen parents, have difficult barriers to overcome. Because of these realities, the needs of girls and young women need to receive special attention as they prepare for the workforce.

Therefore, in preparing young people for the world of work we need to close the gap between education and workforce needs, thereby reducing wage disparity along the way. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act is designed to facilitate that process. As educators and employers implement the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, they need to pay particular attention to the needs of all students, especially females.

School-to-Work Opportunities Act

"The School-To-Work (STW) Opportunities Act of 1994 represents a new approach to learning in America's schools" (Hoye, 1995, p.1). Jointly funded by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education, it provides states with funds for designing school-to-work systems. School-to-work is a model for broadening the educational system to create partnerships with the workplace, by making certain that students experience the workplace as an active learning environment. Some goals of the STW Opportunities Act (P.L. 103-239, 1994, Sec. 3) are to:

- Utilize workplaces as active learning environments in the educational process by making employers joint partners with educators in providing opportunities for *all students* to participate in high-quality, work-based learning experiences.
- Help *all students* attain high academic and occupational standards.
- Motivate *all youths*, including low-achieving youths, school dropouts, and youths with disabilities, to stay in or return to school or a classroom setting and strive

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Congressional Findings in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, P.L. 103-239

- Three-fourths of high school students in the United States enter the workforce without baccalaureate degrees, and many do not possess the academic and entry-level occupational skills necessary to succeed in the changing United States workplace.
- A substantial number of youths in the United States, especially disadvantaged students, students of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, and students with disabilities, do not complete high school.
- Unemployment among youths in the United States is intolerably high, and earnings of high school graduates have been falling relative to earnings of individuals with more education.
- Students in the United States can achieve high academic and occupational standards, and many learn better and retain more when the students learn in context, rather than in the abstract.
- In 1992 approximately 3,400,000 individuals in the United States age 16 through 24 had not completed high school and were not currently enrolled in school, a number representing approximately 11 percent of all individuals in this age group, which indicates that these young persons are particularly unprepared for the demands of a 21st century workforce.

to succeed, by providing enriched learning experiences and assistance in obtaining good jobs and continuing their education in postsecondary educational institutions.

- Expose students to *a broad array of career opportunities*, and facilitate the selection of career majors, based on individual interests, goals, strengths, and abilities.
- Increase opportunities for minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities, by enabling individuals to *prepare for careers that are not traditional for their race, gender, or disability.*

School-to-work introduces all students to a wide range of employment options that can lead them to high-wage, high-skill employment, including students going to four-year colleges. STW does this by

- Developing collaborative partnerships between education, business, labor, and communities
- Integrating academic and vocational/technical curricula
- Maintaining high levels of academic and technical competence
- Creating foundation work skills and competencies to adapt to changing workplace requirements
- Implementing comprehensive career education programs
- Implementing work-based learning experiences

STW starts in the elementary grades with career awareness activities. This allows teachers and employers to create positive experiences for all students, including both males and females, people of color, at-risk students, and students with disabilities. Hopefully, these students will then understand the broad range of career opportunities in their future and the relevance of education. STW continues into grades 7-10 with career exploration activities where students explore key occupational areas and assess their own interests and abilities. Ideally, they will select a career major during this time. Finally, in grades 11-12 it centers on programs where students acquire occupational and academic skills and knowledge for entry level employment and/or advanced occupational training or education. Students will not only earn a high school diploma but also earn a skill certificate in an occupational cluster. They will have the necessary academic and technical skills to secure a first job in their occupational cluster, enter a postsecondary training program or apprenticeship, or continue their formal education.

"We need to reinvent the American school to find a way to catch the attention of . . . young people, to help them get a focus on life a little earlier. We cannot continue to sort students into either a college track or a general track that really leads to nowhere in particular." *Richard W. Riley, Secretary of Education*

Expanding Beyond Vocational Education

School-to-work expands beyond vocational education. It exposes and prepares students for a variety of career options even though it does not necessarily lead to a specific occupation. For example, vocational education prepares students for specific jobs such as dental assistants, welders, or auto body technicians while STW programs prepare students for jobs in broader career clusters such as health care, construction, and transportation occupations. Vocational education can be considered a subset of STW as are apprenticeships, internships, and tech-prep programs. "Vocational education programs are designed to give students initial training and technical skills in specific occupational areas, such as secretarial, auto mechanics, and drafting, through a planned sequence of vocational education courses" (Wiberg, 1995, p. 2). Each is a way to prepare students for high-wage, high-skill employment.

Serving All Students

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act mandates school-to-work systems and programs to address the needs of all students. "The term 'all students' means *both male and female students* from a broad range of backgrounds and circumstances, including disadvantaged students, students with diverse racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, students with disabilities, students with limited-English proficiency, migrant children, school dropouts, and academically talented students" (P.L. 103-239, 1994, Sect. 4.2).

Historically, programs and services for "all students" have been for the populations that educators are most comfortable or familiar with, and that are most like them. For example in the vocational trades programs, white male teachers have traditionally taught white male students. Traditionally in the vocational health, clerical and service programs, white female teachers have taught white female students. In addition, educators have designed recruitment and retention strategies to appeal to the teachers and students historically participating.

One purpose of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act is "to increase opportunities for minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities, by enabling individuals to prepare for careers that are not traditional for their race, gender, or disability" (P.L. 103-239, 1994, Sec.2.13). As states and local partnerships develop their plans, educators and employers cannot ignore the purpose and requirement of the Act as they may have done in the past. For example, in a 1993 study on the STW demonstration sites, Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) documented that

> young women are concentrated in traditionally female training areas and are virtually absent from technical and high-wage training areas. These findings are disappointing for the futures of the young women served, but most importantly, they indicate that new and supposedly 'state of the art' training continues to perpetuate sex bias and sex stereotyping that will result in continued wage disparities between men and women. (Milgram & Watkins, 1994, p. 1)

A committed effort must be made to recruit and retain students in nontraditional career exploration and preparation.

Besides adapting program design to recruit, train, and prepare students for nontraditional careers, serving "all students" may mean providing support services. For example, if a teen parent wants to participate in an STW activity but has child care and/or transportation needs, the STW plan must accommodate those needs for him or her to succeed in the school- and/or work-based components of STW programs. If an at-risk student is in an STW program, the STW plan must provide a mentor/advocate and other special services for that student. By infusing these strategies and services into the local STW plan, educators and employers will be more likely to incorporate them from the beginning and they will truly serve "all students". "This ensures that everyone, regardless of their academic, social, cultural, ethnic, age, or physical differences, receives equal access to educational services" (Hoye, 1995, p. 4). As a result, equity becomes a reality for students, educators, and employers.

"Nothing can be more absurd than the practice that prevails in our country of men and women not following the same pursuits with all their strengths and with one mind, for thus the state, instead of being whole, is reduced to half." ***Plato***

Incorporating Equity into the Three Basic Components

There are three basic components to the School-to-Work Opportunities Act: work-based learning, school-based learning, and connecting activities. School-to-work systems must integrate these three components within their plans to provide a variety of options and experiences that bridge education and employment. These three components take place within the broader context of career awareness, exploration, and preparation. The objectives and key elements of the components are as follows. In addition, some strategies for ensuring equity for all students are suggested.

School-based learning provides students with opportunities for career exploration, instruction in both academic and technical skills, and guidance in identifying employment and education goals. Strategies for equity might include:

Career counseling. Expose all students to a variety of career options, including nontraditional, high-wage, high-skill jobs. Give attention to surmounting gender, race, ethnic, disability, language, or socioeconomic impediments. Implement early interventions for at-risk students, especially teen parents.

Even though parental interaction is not a mandate in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, it is critical to implement strategies for parental involvement in career planning. Parents have a major influence on careers their children explore and select. They are often not familiar with the broad array of opportunities available to their children. Strategies to implement might include: Acquaint parents with the types of training and jobs that their children, especially their daughters, can pursue. Address parents' fears and concerns about their children pursuing nontraditional and/or technical careers. Emphasize career futures in technical fields and the higher wage potential that their children can earn.

Selection of a career major. Identify various legitimate paths to a particular career goal, including individualized time lines. Prepare students who select nontraditional careers for potential isolation, harassment, or other difficulties.

Program of study. Ensure equity in computer access, use, and outcomes. Eliminate barriers for females and people of color to succeed in math, science, and technology. Actively recruit females into upper-level math and science courses.

Integration of academic and vocational education. Make sure that males and females receive instruction in the same competencies and have the same expectations for performance. Adapt teaching strategies to fit various learning styles.

Evaluation. Assure that assessment instruments are free of cultural and gender bias. Assess student progress according to academic strengths and weaknesses, academic progress, workplace knowledge, career goals, and learning opportunities needed for mastery of core academic and vocational skills.

Secondary/Postsecondary articulation. Offer assistance, such as timing of classes, academic remediation, child care, and transportation for single parents, displaced homemakers, and students with disabilities transitioning from secondary to postsecondary programs or training programs.

Work-based learning provides students with a planned program of job training and other employment experiences related to a chosen career. Strategies for equity might include:

Work experience. Make a commitment that wages earned through paid work experience in an STW program will not affect a person's public assistance benefits, including AFDC, food stamps, housing subsidies, etc. Expose students to a variety of departments, processes, and areas, allowing for a range of career choices. Support employers that have eliminated sex bias, harassment, and hostile environments in the workplace. Develop effective partnerships with businesses and industries who use equitable hiring practices and are sensitive to equity issues. Educate employers in sex bias, harassment and hostile environ-

ment issues. Ensure that the school population is equitably represented in work experiences.

Job training. Assure that males and females have convenient access to restrooms, locker rooms, changing areas, etc.

Workplace mentoring. For each student, decide if cross-gender mentoring will enhance or reduce an effective mentoring experience. Develop community support for mentoring/job shadowing in nontraditional fields.

Instruction in workplace competencies. Develop interpersonal and communication skills in all students. Provide opportunities for students to work cooperatively in heterogeneous groupings.

Instruction in all aspects of an industry. Make sure that males and females see a broad range of occupations within the industry, including traditional and nontraditional occupations for each gender.

"Partnerships between business and education build vital and successful school-to-work programs that fit the needs of local communities and have the flexibility to respond to changes in the local labor market and economy."
Robert B. Reich, Secretary of Labor

Connecting activities ensures coordination between the work-based and school-based learning components. Strategies for equity might include:

Matching students with employers. Place nontraditional students with employers who are sensitive to equity issues. Provide work-based learning competencies in a variety of workplace environments. Create safe work/learning environments free of harassment and violence.

Education and work liaisons. Establish close partnerships between school-site mentors and workplace mentors to identify and implement necessary student support services. Use nontraditional industry volunteers to teach classroom material, by bringing in demonstrations and basing their lessons on their work experiences. Create advisory committees representative of the school population.

Technical assistance to schools, students, and employers. Provide technical assistance and professional development for counseling and training of all students, including males and females, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in high-skill, high-wage careers in nontraditional employment. Educate staff in equity sensitive language. Use gender-neutral language.

Assistance to integrate school-based and work-based learning. Restructure and modify teaching methods at school and in the workplace to adapt to various learning styles. Collaborate in developing appropriate learning activities for school- and work-based components. Increase participation of business and community organizations in math, science, and technology education. Develop recruitment materials free of sex bias and stereotyping.

Encourage participation of employers. Recruit nontraditional employers to be involved at all levels of the STW program. Offer training and educational opportunities for employees of participating employers.

Transition assistance. Develop partnerships with community agencies who work well with teen parents, single parents, and displaced homemakers and are committed to helping them obtain skills in securing and retaining employment.

Post-program outcomes. Collect and present data based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, disability, and socioeconomic status.

Linkages between youth development activities and industry. Expand math, science, and technology summer camp programs for females and people of color. Develop closer working relationships between schools and youth organizations that offer programs in math, science, and technology (e.g., Girl Scouts, 4-H).

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act mandates all three components--school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. Integrating strategies to ensure equity within each component is critical. In order for all students to have equal access to the full range of STW programs, educators and employers must infuse strategies ensuring equity throughout the state and local implementation plans from the beginning.

Developing the Local School-to-Work Implementation Plan

Local partnerships in the regional alliances will develop and conduct a local plan that will provide a framework for the implementation of all school-to-work programs in each region. These local partnerships should consist of employers, educators (including secondary, vocational, and postsecondary administrators and teachers), students, labor organizations, nonmanagerial employee representatives, and other local community and business agencies. These other agencies will need to include individuals and representatives from agencies that are advocates of gender equity (e.g., Equity Grant Coordinators, ONOW Program Coordinators, JTPA New Team Coordinators).

Besides developing and implementing a local plan, "[t]he local partnership is required to design a special compact or agreement among key players. This compact must detail the responsibilities and expectations of students, parents, employers and schools" (Brustein & Mahler, 1994, p. 61). Once again, educators and employers need to infuse equity into every component of the plan in order to serve "all students". "It is especially important that local partnerships receiving federal grants be held to the highest possible standards on equity issues, because they will serve as models for the programs in the rest of the state" (Miller et al., 1994, p. 15).

While creating and implementing the local plan, work with the regional alliances and state STW office and key resource staff. Contact resource organizations listed for technical advice and assistance with your advocacy efforts in equity issues. Inform local and state elected officials on successful programs, especially those with nontraditional students in high-skill, high-wage jobs. Use the media to raise the visibility of gender equity and students in nontraditional occupations. By employing these strategies, the local plan will address the educational and employment needs of students in the region.

Summary

It is time to form the bridge between education and employment. "The United States lacks a comprehensive and coherent system to help its youths acquire the knowledge, skills, abilities, and information about and access to the labor market necessary to make an effective transition from school to career-oriented work or to further education and training" (P.L. 103-239, Sec. 2.5). School-to-work systems and programs can offer students

Ohio's School-to-Work Implementation Plan

As of September 1994, Ohio was one of 27 states receiving STW federal funds. The five-year federal implementation grant will provide $9 million during the first year of operation. Only 25 percent of the federal dollars will be used at the state level. The remaining 75 percent of federal dollars will be distributed among regional alliances. In addition, Ohio legislators have appropriated over $2.5 million per fiscal year for the FY 96 and FY 97 biennium.

The Ohio STW implementation plan includes supporting the development of regional alliances and local partnerships structured around the state's 12 economic development regions. Each alliance will develop a one-year operating plan that demonstrates appropriate partnerships and organizational protocols. The one-year plan will include broad partnerships with business, industry, labor, education, human services, economic development entities, community-based organizations, and other programs and structures focused on workforce development. A five-year plan that analyzes the region's readiness to implement STW and establishes longer-term goals and strategies will follow.

The Ohio STW staff from five state agencies are responsible for building regional alliances, serving as liaisons between the agencies and constituencies, developing outreach initiatives and STW resources, providing technical assistance, and managing the federal and state funds distribution. The Ohio Department of Education has four individuals loaned to this STW cross-agency team. These individuals plus the Ohio STW director and staff are listed on the next page. They are key resource people for educators to contact as they assist in developing local partnerships and demonstration projects.

many opportunities to explore and prepare for the world of work. The needs of girls and young women need to receive special attention as they prepare for the workforce. Ensuring equity in school-to-work state and local plans is critical to the success of all students and the future of our nation.

"The mission of Ohio's STW is to ensure that every Ohio student graduates from high school and beyond with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the ever-changing world of work--and is prepared for lifelong learning." *Ohio State Board of Education*

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Resources

In addition to the resource organizations listed on the back page, many classroom resources are available through the Sex Equity Resource Library at the Center on Education and Training for Employment, 1900 Kenny Rd., Columbus, OH 43210-1090, (614) 292-4353 or (800) 848-4815. These resources are available for loan to Ohio vocational educators and can be incorporated into career guidance and counseling training and assistance, recruitment for nontraditional occupations, and other STW activities. Examples of types of resources are videos on nontraditional occupations, curricula on infusing school and work-based experiences, books on recruitment strategies, and articles on developing business partnerships. Contact Steve Chambers, Librarian for the Sex Equity Resource Center Catalog and/or recommended resources.

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